

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 KABUL 5981

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SUBJ: U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

1. SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN (DRA) HAS LEFTIST ANTECEDENTS, WE BELIEVE IT PREMATURE TO ATTEMPT TO CHARACTERIZE IT WITH SOME DEGREE OF ACCURACY OR TO ATTACH A SPECIFIC LABEL TO IT. THE SIGNALS ARE MIXED. THERE IS AMPLE EVIDENCE OF AN EXPANDED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION, YET THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE IT CLEAR TO UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM AND TO ME THAT IT WISHES TO KEEP ITS OPTIONS OPEN TO THE U.S. AND TO OTHER MEMBERS OF THE NON-COMMUNIST WORLD, INCLUDING COUNTRIES SUCH AS IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA. IT IS DOING THIS NOT ONLY TO MAXIMIZE ECONOMIC AID AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, BUT ALSO TO AVOID, WE BELIEVE, A TOTAL RELIANCE ON THE SOVIET UNION WHICH COULD EVENTUALLY SUBJECT THE GOVERNMENT TO INTOLERABLE PRESSURES FROM MOSCOW. CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONS WITH NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES ALSO CONVEYS A DEGREE OF LEGITIMACY, FOR THE BENEFIT OF INTERNAL AND EXTEFNAL AUDIENCES, TO THE DRA'S PROFESSION OF ADHERENCE TO NONALIGNMENT. AT THIS CRUCIAL MOMENT IN AFGHANISTAN'S HISTORY, WE BELIEVE IT DESIRABLE TO PROVIDE THE GOVERNMENT WITH ROOM TO MANEUVER, TO SUPPORT ITS DESIRE TO REMAIN
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INDEPENDENT AND NONALIGNED, AND TO ENCOURAGE IT TO EVOLVE A POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM SUITED TO AFGHAN NEEDS RATHER THAN BLINDLY FOLLOWING THE SOVIET MODEL. AT THIS POINT, THEN, WE SHOULD, WITH CIRCUMSPECTION, BE RESPONSIVE TO ASSISTANCE REQUESTS AND OTHER BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS THAT WOULDDEMONSTRATE THAT WE ARE SENSITIVE TO THE LEADERSHIP'S PROFESSED DESIRE TO KEEP

ITS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OPTIONS OPEN. AT THE SAME TIME, WE WILL HAVE TO REMAIN ALERT TO ACTIONS WHICH WE FIND DETRIMENTAL TO U.S. INTERESTS. UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM PUT THE DRA LEADERSHIP ON NOTICE THAT OUR APPROACH TO ASSISTANCE REQUESTS WOULD BE REVIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF (A) ANY MOVE BY THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF AFGHANISTAN (PDPA), THE RULING PARTY, TO BECOME A PART OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT, (B) ANY INDICATIONS THAT U.S. AID PERSONNEL WERE DENIED TREATMENT AND ACCESS COMPARABLE TO THOSE OF OTHER DONORS, AND (C) ANY INDICATIONS THAT THE DRA WAS FOMENTING PROBLEMS FOR PAKISTAN AND IRAN OR DEPARTING FROM GENUINE NONALIGNMENT. SHOULD THE DRA ACT CONTRARY TO THESE GUIDELINES, WE MAY FIND THAT OUR INTERESTS AND THOSE OF OUR FRIENDS ARE BEST SERVED BY SIGNALING OUR DISPLEASURE IN CONCRETE AND UNEQUIVOCAL TERMS.

2. THIS CABLE SUMMARIZES SOME OF THE MORE SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE AS WELL AS NEGATIVE INDICATORS ON THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT AND HOW WE RECOMMEND WE PROCEED IN SPECIFIC AREAS OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. END SUMMARY

3. DRA APPROACH TO THE U.S. IT NOW SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE TARAKI GOVT WANTS GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. THIS HAS BEEN REPEATED TO US EVERY TIME A HIGH-LEVEL CONFIDENTIAL

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DEPARTMENT OR EMBASSY OFFICIAL HAS MET WITH CHAIRMAN TARAKI, FOMIN AMIN, DEPFOMIN DOST, OR ANY OTHER AFGHAN OFFICIAL. IT IS REFLECTED, TOO, BY THE TARAKI REGIME'S NOT TAKING ANY POSITION OR ACTION UP TO NOW DIRECTLY INIMICAL TO THE U.S., OR TO OUR PRINCIPAL PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN. IT IS ALSO REFLECTED BY OTHER PROMISING SIGNS, SUCH AS THE GOVERNMENT'S PERMITTING THREE CABINET MINISTERS AND EIGHT DEPUTY MINISTERS TO COME TO OUR JULY 4 RECEPTION, A RECORD TOTAL OF SUCH OFFICIALS ATTENDING A NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION. IT IS SHOWN, TOO, BY THE GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE TO CONTINUE PAN AMERICAN'S JOINT VENTURE IN ARIANA AFGHAN AIRLINES (OUR BIGGEST INVESTMENT HERE) AND ITS DECISION TO PURCHASE A MCDONNELL-DOUGLAS DC-10. LASTLY, IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT ALMOST ALL OUR USG PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN ARE CONTINUING: USAID, PEACE CORPS, IMET, AND USICA. EVEN THE ASIA FOUNDATION'S ACTIVITIES PROCEED. OTHER WESTERN EMBASSIES HERE REPORT SIMILAR POSITIVE SIGNS.

4. POSITIVE INDICATORS. ALTHOUGH THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS LEFTIST (SEE KABUL A-65), IT DEFIES SHARP

DESCRIPTION AT THIS MOMENT. THE REGIME CONTINUES
STUDIOUSLY TO AVOID USE OF THE TERMS "SOCIALIST" OR
"COMMUNIST". PRIVATE PROPERTY, UP TO CERTAIN LIMITS,
IS TO BE RESPECTED; SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES ARE
TO BE FOSTERED; AND THE FIRST MOVES IN THE AREA OF
LAND REFORM WILL EMPHASIZE SMALL PRIVATE FARM HOLDINGS
ORGANIZED INTO VOLUNTARY COOPERATIVES. WHILE THERE IS
A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH AND AN IDEOLOGICAL AFFINITY
TO THE SOVIET UNION, THE TARAKI GOVT HAS REPEATEDLY
EMPHASIZED TO US AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS ITS DETERMIN-
TION TO KEEP THE COUNTRY INDEPENDENT, TO PURSUE A NON-
ALIGNED FOREIGN POLICY, AND TO HAVE PEACEFUL RELATIONS
WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, IRAN AND PAKISTAN. SINCE THE
GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITIES ARE PREDOMINANTLY DOMESTIC
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(AND DEVELOPMENT) ORIENTED, TARAKI AND AMIN HAVE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 KABUL 5981

STATED THAT THESE CANNOT BE IMPLEMENTED WERE THE
GOVERNMENT TO FOSTER TENSIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS.
TARAKI HAS ALSO TOLD UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM THAT NO
FOREIGN TROOPS WOULD BE PERMITTED IN THE COUNTRY. HE
ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT SHOULD AFGHANISTAN BE ATTACKED
HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM WHEREEVER IT
MIGHT GET IT.

5. TROUBLESOME INDICATORS. WHILE THE ABOVE INDICATORS ARE ENCOURAGING, WE SHOULD NOT LOSE SIGHT OF OTHER CONSIDERATIONS. ONE IS THAT THE REGIME APPEARS TO HAVE ONLY THIN PUBLIC SUPPORT, AND SOME DETERMINED ENEMIES WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY. THUS, THE INTERNAL SITUATION REMAINS UNSTABLE, WITH THE POSSIBILITY EVER PRESENT OF A COUNTERCOUP OR SOME INTERNAL DIVISION ERUPTING INTO CIVIL WAR. THE TRIBAL DISTURBANCES IN THE BORDER PROVINCES OF PAKTIA AND KONAR DO NOT PRESENTLY REPRESENT A THREAT THE REGIME CANNOT HANDLE. ANOTHER CONSIDERATION IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE FORM OF RULE SO FAR REVEALED IS A TEMPORARY TACTIC PENDING THE REGIME'S SECURING FULL CONTROL OVER THE COUNTRY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LARGER CADRE OF DEDICATED PARTY FOLLOWERS. SUCH EVIDENCE AS WE HAVE DOES INDICATE THAT THE VISION
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TARAKI AND COMPANY HAVE FOR THEIR COUNTRY MAY BE SIMILAR TO THE SYSTEM PREVAILING IN EASTERN EUROPE, AND THIS IS WORRISOME. HOWEVER, THE REGIME CONTINUES TO INSIST IT IS NOT COMMUNIST AND TO AVOID LABELING ITSELF AS MARXIST-LENINIST IN ORIENTATION.

6. GUIDELINES FOR U.S. POLICY. GIVEN THE SITUATION DESCRIBED ABOVE, WE BELIEVE THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL PILLARS OF OUR POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN SHOULD BE AS FOLLOWS: 1) FRIENDSHIP ON THE BASIS OF MUTUAL RESPECT AND BENEFIT; 2) SUPPORT FOR AFGHAN INDEPENDENCE, AND ITS CALL FOR NONINTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS; 3) ENCOURAGEMENT OF A GENUINELY NONALIGNED AFGHAN FOREIGN POLICY; 4) ENCOURAGEMENT OF PEACE AND STABILITY BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS FOUR NEIGHBORS, ESPECIALLY PAKISTAN AND IRAN; AND 5) SUPPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

7. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY. IN LIGHT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION, WE BELIEVE INDIVIDUAL ASPECTS OF OUR RELATIONSHIP SHOULD BE HANDLED AS FOLLOWS:

A. USAID. WE SHOULD CONTINUE OUR AID PROGRAM ALONG THE LINES OF THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PACKAGE WE HAVE PROPOSED TO AID WASHINGTON AND INFORMALLY TO THE PREVIOUS AND PRESENT AFGHAN REGIMES. ANY MOVE TO INCREASE OBLIGATION LEVELS OVER TIME WILL HAVE TO BE REVIEWED IN LIGHT OF THE CRITERIA MENTIONED ABOVE. IN THE PAST, OUR ABILITY TO INCREASE OUR LEVELS HAS BEEN HAMPERED BY AFGHANISTAN'S INABILITY TO ABSORB AID RAPIDLY. IN THIS REGARD, THE NEW GOVERNMENT SEEMS MORE DETERMINED TO ACT THAN ITS PREDECESSOR, YET MANY

OF THE OLD CONSTRAINTS, SUCH AS THE PAUCITY OF EDUCATED
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CIVIL SERVANTS, REMAIN. THUS, OUR AID LEVELS ARE
UNLIKELY TO RISE IMMEDIATELY WHATEVER WE MAY DO. FOR THE
TIME BEING, OUR MAIN FOCUS WILL BE ON ON-GOING
PROGRAMS AND THOSE THAT WERE IN THE DISCUSSION PHASE
WITH THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT.

B. PEACE CORPS. IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS, OUR PEACE
CORPS OFFICE HAS BEEN ENCOURAGED BY THE RECEIPT OF A TWO
SEPARATE FORMAL REQUESTS TOTALLING THIRTEEN NEW VOLUNTEERS,
THE FIRST SUCH REQUESTS RECEIVED SINCE THE REVOLUTION.
FURTHERMORE, ANOTHER MINISTRY (HIGHER EDUCATION) HAS
STATED THAT THEY MAY HAVE REQUESTS FOR VOLUNTEERS IN
THE FUTURE.

WHILE THESE SIGNS INDICATE THAT THE PEACE CORPS
WILL NOT HAVE TO PACK UP HERE, THE LIMITED NUMBER OF
REQUESTS IN THE WORKS DOES SUGGEST THAT, FOR THE NEXT
YEAR OR SO, THE NUMBER OF PCVS IS LIKELY TO DROP
SHARPLY FROM THE PRESENT TOAL OF 65 TO PERHAPS 30
OR LOWER. WE HOPE THAT AS THE NEW GOVERNMENT COMES TO
KNOW THE PEACE CORPS BETTER, IT WILL STEP UP ITS
REQUESTS FOR HELP. MEANWHILE, WE ASK THAT PEACE CORPS
WASHINGTON BE UNDERSTANDING AND PATIENT IF PCV LEVELS
FALL.

C. MILITARY TRAINING IN THE U.S. (IMET). SINCE THE
NEW GOVERNMENT CAME INTO POWER, ONLY TWO OF EIGHT
OFFERED SLOTS FOR MILITARY TRAINING IN THE U.S. HAVE
BEEN FILLED. HIGH AFGHAN DEFENSE MINISTRY OFFICIALS
HAVE NONETHELESS EXPRESSED A CONTINUED INTEREST IN OUR
PROGRAM AND HOPEFULLY THIS WILL BE TRANSLATED INTO A
LARGER FLOW OF REQUESTS NEXT FISCAL YEAR. AN UNCERTAIN
ASPECT OF THIS, HOWEVER, RELATES TO CHAIRMAN TARAHI'S
OWN VIEWS ON THE PROGRAM. WE JUST LEARNED THAT HE HAD
NEVER HEARD OF THE PROGRAM UNTIL LAST WEEK AND INTENDED
TO LOOK INTO IT. WE BELIEVE, NONETHELESS, THAT WE
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SHOULD OFFER CONTINUATION OF THE PROGRAM IF THEY ARE
STILL INTERESTED.

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D. USICA ACTIVITIES. OUR VARIOUS PROGRAMS HERE CONTINUE, BUT SOME PROBLEMS EXIST. OUR LIBRARY CONTINUES TO FUNCTION NORMALLY, BUT THE GOVT HAS TURNED DOWN OUR REQUEST THAT OUR NUMBER TWO LOCAL LIBRARIAN ATTEND A LIBRARY TRAINING COURSE IN WASHINGTON. OUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAM, WITH A TOTAL ENROLLMENT OF ABOUT 1,000 STUDENTS, IS FUNCTIONING. THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE HAS STOPPED ITS UN-FUNDED PROGRAM FOR 65 OF ITS OFFICIALS, BUT RADIO TV HAS REQUESTED NEW TRAINING. IN THE EXCHANGE-OF-PERSONS AREA, THE GOVT HAS COME UP WITH SEVERAL NOMINEES FOR IVP GRANTS AND PERMITTED THE DEPARTURE OF AFGHAN STUDENTS ALREADY SELECTED, AND SIX UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA STUDENTS TO COME HERE FOR THE SUMMER. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOVT HAS STATED THAT IT WANTS TO TERMINATE THE OLD PROCEDURE OF OPEN COMPETITION FOR SELECTING AFGHAN EXCHANGE STUDENTS TO STUDY IN THE U.S., DEMANDING INSTEAD THAT THE AFGHAN GOVT BE ALLOWED TO CHOOSE THOSE WHO GO. WE ARE SEEKING A SOLUTION TO THIS AND TRYING IN GENERAL TO BE FLEXIBLE, AND HOPE ICA CAN SUPPORT US.

E. EMBASSY ATTACHE AIRCRAFT. AS OF NOW, OUR BEECHCRAFT C-12. IS GROUNDED PENDING CLARIFICATION WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OF THE FORMAL BASIS UNDER WHICH IT OPERATES HERE. EVEN IF THIS IS ESTABLISHED, IT IS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN THE GOVT WILL CONTINUE TO PERMIT THE AIRCRAFT IN COUNTRY.
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8. OTHER PROBLEMS. ASIDE FROM THE ABOVE, ONE PROBLEM

INVOLVING A PRIVATE AMERICAN PARTY REMAINS UNSOLVED.
THIS PERTAINS TO THE GOVERNMENT'S ORDER TO A PREDOMINANTLY
AMERICAN-OWNED TRADING COMPANY (INDAMER) TO CEASE
OPERATIONS AND PAY LARGE AMOUNTS OF BACK TAXES (A
SITUATION ALSO FACED BY A BRITISH TRADING COMPANY HERE).
THE COMPANY IS AGREEABLE TO TERMINATING ITS OPERATIONS,
BUT IS UNHAPPY ABOUT ITS TAX ASSESSMENTS, HINTING THAT
IT WILL SEEK IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HICKENLOOPER AMENDMENT AS
REPRISAL FOR "NATIONALIZATION". WE ARE TRYING TO HELP THE COMPANY
IN DEALING WITH THE GOVT.

9. RESTRICTION ON ATTACHE TRAVEL. ANOTHER PROBLEM RELATES TO A
JUST-IMPOSED DRA RESTRICTION WHEREBY MILITARY ATTACHES HAVE TO
GIVE THREE WEEKS' ADVANCE NOTICE TO THE DRA BEFORE THEY MAY TRAVEL
BY ROAD OUTSIDE KABUL. THIS RESTRICTION APPEARS TO APPLY TO
ALL MILITARY ATTACHES BUT TO NO OTHER CATEGORY OF MISSION
PERSONNEL. WE ARE STUDYING WHAT, IF ANYTHING, WE SHOULD DO ABOUT THIS
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10. CONCLUSION: BASED ON THE EVIDENCE TO DATE, WE BELIEVE IT
PRUDENT TO COOPERATE WITH THIS GOVT IN A MEASURED AND PRACTICAL
MANNER. AT THIS CRITICAL AND FLUID STAGE IN THE NEW GOVT'S DEVELOP-
MENT, WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN A POSITIVE AMERICAN
PRESENCE WITH VISIBLE, TANGIBLE AMERICAN PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN.
CONCEIVABLY, THE REGIME, ONCE ITS POSITION IS MORE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED

,
MAY EMBARK UPON POLICIES HARMFUL TO OUR OVERALL INTERESTS. IT IS
PRECISELY TO AVOID SUCH AN EVENTUALITY THAT WE SHOULD MAINTAIN
ENOUGH LOCAL LEVERAGE TO INFLUENCE THIS REGIME TO PURSUE MODERATE
AND NONALIGNED POLICIES. IF ALLOWED TO DO SO, WE BELIEVE THAT
WE AND OUR WESTERN COLLEAGUES CAN RETAIN SOME INFLUENCE HERE.
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TO ABANDON THE FIELD TO THE COMPETITION FROM THE SOVIET UNION WOULD
SERVE NEITHER OUR INTERESTS NOR THOSE OF THE APPREHENSIVE,
POWERLESS AFGHAN MASSES. HAVING AN INCREASED NUMBER OF SOVIET CIVI-
LIAN AND MILITARY ADVISERS PRESENT IN AFGHANISTAN IS ONE THING;
HAVING SOVIET FORCES IN THE COUNTRY WOULD BE QUITE ANOTHER MATTER IN
TERMS OF OUR INTERESTS IN REGIONAL AND, INDEED, GLOBAL STABILITY.
IF OUR POLICIES CAN HELP MAINTAIN A HIGH DEGREE OF AFGHAN INDEPENDENCE

AND AVOID PRETEXTS FOR AN ARMED SOVIET PRESENCE, WE WILL INDEED HAVE
SOME REASON FOR SATISFACTION.
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